

Corps of Engineers provides technical assistance to Lewis County with controlled levee breach

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SEATTLE - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood engineers are providing technical assistance with Lewis County plans to breach the Airport levee near the City of Chehalis this morning.

This non-federal levee was end run and overtopped during the flood, and the water on the inside of the levee is higher than water on the river side. The intent of the levee breach is to reduce flooding of the airport and I-5. Without the breach, the waters flooding the airport and interstate would take days to pump out. The levee breach may also prevent further damage to the levee. The closure of I-5 is a very significant impact on the State of Washington and this levee breach will accelerate the dewatering of the freeway.

Lewis County and Washington State Department of Transportation have coordinated the breach plan with Seattle District, Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps assisted the County with selecting the breach location and will provide technical assistance with breaching the levee today.

The Seattle District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has six flood teams spread throughout western Washington monitoring levees and assisting local governments. Flood teams are out in the Chehalis, Puyallup, Olympic, Skagit, Cedar and Snohomish river basins.

A flood team has completed repairing a levee, which sustained damage in last year's flooding, along the Nooksack River in Whatcom County. The Corps has provided 12,000 sandbags in Snohomish County, including to the towns of Arlington, Snohomish and Bothell. A flood team was sent to Shoalwater Bay on Saturday in response to a request for assistance from the Shoalwater Tribe provided 4,500 sandbags and is strengthening a damaged flood berm there.

Public Law 84-99 enables the Corps to assist state and local authorities in flood fight activities and cost share in the repair of flood protection structures. The purpose is to prevent loss of life and minimize property damage associated with severe weather.

The Corps activated its Emergency Operations Center and the Reservoir Control Center (RCC) this weekend in advance of the storm and continues to operate 24 hours a day. The National Weather Service issues severe weather, flood watches and warnings and should be consulted for that information.

For more information on the Corps, and up-to-date river forecasts, go to www.nws.usace.army.mil and click on Rivers and Reservoirs. Lake and river information is available at; <http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/nws/hh/basins/> Private citizens seeking sandbags should contact their local government offices.

